

Against the Grain

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University of Louisiana at Monroe (ULM) Library Profile

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we have no authority to discipline PP, here were individuals who did have such authority. PP was directed to apologize to us; as of this date, we have yet to receive a meaningful apology, beyond PP apologizing for her "insensitive" tone during my family's difficult time. This event seemed to dampen PP's enthusiasm for trouble for several months.

A Precedent for Hostility: Enmity Between Classroom Faculty and Librarians

One might rightfully point out that PP's behavior is not representative of her colleagues or even faculty at large. This is true, and, in fact, several members of the ULC privately contacted me to express their support for the project, the Library, and even me personally. However, many of her statements regarding the competency and expertise of librarians versus the discipline-specific expertise of traditional classroom faculty echo what may be called the historical enmity between classroom faculty and library faculty.

This enmity dates back to the mid-1950s.⁶ There appear to be several factors which contribute to this enmity. The most commonly cited, and to my mind most likely and frequently occurring, is communication/miscommunication. There also appears to be a failure to recognize the common cause of teaching faculty and library faculty: to educate and support the students we serve.⁷ However, there are also issues which are immediately relevant to both my current situation and the focus of this overall issue; it is what one resource referred to as "incendiary collections issues."⁸ Related to this notion is the idea of territorial issues: jealousy of our "possession" of books and materials; our "encroachment" into the classroom; what they regard as our failure to participate appropriately in the wider academic community; and feeling threatened.⁹ Some of this jealousy and feeling threatened is related to another factor: a failure to understand our roles and services as librarians, as well as the services of the library itself.¹⁰ Being aware of these issues and attempting to overcome through active outreach and collaboration are key to reducing and preventing this enmity.

Do I believe that PP and other faculty members who deeply object to the deselection project were conscious, deliberate participants in this historical enmity? No. But they have clearly exhibited several of the behaviors described here. Might there be personality issues? Entirely possible. Some of PP's colleagues, both in her department and outside of it, have reported a similar pattern of behaviors as reported here in other circumstances, so it's not likely that PP has a special vendetta against the Library, librarians, or even me. But her behavior, quite apart from demonstrating that enmity, is also evidence of another issue beginning to gain attention in higher education: academic incivility.

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against the grain library profile

University of Louisiana at Monroe Library (ULM)

700 University Avenue, Monroe, LA 71209

Phone: (318) 342-1050 • Fax: (318) 342-1075 • <http://www.ulm.edu/library>

LIBRARY BACKGROUND/HISTORY: The stunning twenty-four million dollar building currently housing the University Library is located on the banks of the scenic Bayou DeSiard. The five-story facility, of approximately 140,000 square feet, seats 2,000 users at study carrels, tables, and in comfortable easy chairs placed throughout the building. When the Library opened on April 12, 1999, the beautiful furnishings included ample shelving to accommodate at least ten years' growth. Growth and change have been a constant throughout the more than seven decades of the University Library's history.

Just as the university has gone through several different iterations, so has the Library. It has been housed in various buildings on campus, including Brown Hall and Bry Hall, before taking up residence in a building built for the library, Sandel Hall, named for **Mr. Percy Sandel**, a former district attorney and judge who had been instrumental in the establishment of the university. The library was housed in Sandel Hall from 1961 until 1999, when it moved to its current location. The library is both a state and a federal repository.

STAFF: A total of seven staff members, five full-time reference librarians (including me), one ILL librarian (who also serves as a reference librarian), one acquisitions librarian, one technical services/cataloging librarian, one special collections librarian (who also serves as the current assistant dean), and the dean.

TYPES OF MATERIALS YOU BUY: At this time, the majority of our budget goes towards our membership in a state consortium of electronic resources (databases, ejournals, and eBooks). We are currently transitioning to a more electronic/digital format and are trying to obtain a grant to fund etextbooks.

USE OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGY: We do not currently have a mobile platform for our library resources.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR LIBRARY WILL BE LIKE IN FIVE YEARS? The print collection will be reduced from four to two floors (a process currently in the offing). More digital resources will (hopefully) be added. The two floors "freed up" by the extensive weeding project we're currently undergoing will be fitted with technology-equipped spaces for teaching, learning, and collaborating. I think in five years it will more closely resemble the socializing/collaborating spaces that many libraries are transitioning towards.

DEPARTMENTAL INFORMATION: I, **Megan Lowe**, currently serve as the Coordinator of Public Services. I am over Reference/Instruction and ILL. I coordinate with the Head of Circulation regarding public services issues. I work as both a reference librarian and an instructional librarian still, as well as serving as a liaison librarian to several departments. I frequently convene (and sometimes chair) committees to address issues and projects in the library. I meet weekly with the Head of Technical Services, the Assistant Dean, and the Dean to identify and address issues which arise within the library and those issues from the campus which may affect the library. As a faculty member, I serve on university-related committees outside the library. I must also publish and participate in professional development as a means of maintaining tenure and pursuing promotion again, to achieve the rank of Full Professor.

HOW MANY DIVISIONS ARE THERE IN YOUR DEPARTMENT? Technically, just two — Reference and ILL.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WORK IN YOUR DEPARTMENT? A total of six, including myself.

WHAT IS YOUR MATERIALS BUDGET? \$0. The library's budget is entirely handled by the Dean, and it goes primarily to our consortium membership and access to electronic resources.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS OF INTEREST TO ATG READERS: Currently my library is undertaking a HUGE deselection project. Part of the reason is that the collection hasn't been weeded in over 30 years. The other part is that it represents the first step in our transition to a primarily digital library. While there has been a lot of resistance on campus to this transition, I see it as an inevitable change, a reasonable response to the changing face of our student body and their changing needs, as well as a logical "evolution" of libraries in an increasingly digital, diverse, and global society. I also see it as a responsible use of our budget, given how unstable higher education monies and budgets are in this state, especially for public institutions. 🌱